

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Fred Upton
Subcommittees on Energy and Power & Environment and the Economy
Hearing on “Oversight of NRC Management and the Need for Legislative Reform”
December 12, 2013**

(As Prepared for Delivery)

We welcome back Chairman McFarlane and the commissioners.

I was pleased to see the commission’s conclusions in its November 18th order to resume review of the Yucca Mountain license application. That is a long-overdue and vital task. Resumption of the Yucca Mountain program remains the clearest, fastest, and most fiscally responsible way for the government to meet its obligation to provide disposal, mitigate liability costs, and reestablish a solid basis for the waste confidence rule. I’m eager to hear when the NRC anticipates releasing the long-awaited Safety Evaluation Report.

In a recent letter to the commission, Chairmen Shimkus and Whitfield raised issues about the NRC’s efficient use of resources. It’s disconcerting to see that the NRC’s budget has grown yet the agency seems to struggle to conclude fundamental work in a timely fashion. This is an area where I expect we will be focusing more attention in the future.

I commend my colleague, Lee Terry, for taking the initiative to draft legislation to address commission challenges related to governance and structure. Some of these concerns came to light during the previous NRC chairman’s tenure and we want to be sure that such problems do not recur.

While I am pleased with Chairman McFarlane’s leadership style and relieved to see the commission once again functioning as a collegial body as it should, these governance issues also should be addressed to make sure all commissioners can contribute effectively to agency decision-making and staff are properly accountable to the commission and to the public whom they serve.

There is no question that the NRC is one of our most important agencies, and it is critical we do what we can to optimize its performance.

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